

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Fossil Macropod Tooth from Gingin.—While searching for Cretaceous fossils in the Gingin district in 1969, I found a macropod tooth fragment in a gully on the north east face of Moorgup Hill. This was identified by Dr. D. Merrilees (Western Australian Museum) as the hinder part of a molar of a species of the extinct genus *Protomnodon* (in the restricted sense). The specimen, which I have in my possession, is embedded in chalky matrix. The Western Australian Museum has a plaster cast, No. 69.9.10. Mrs. R. Roe (who recently found a *Zygomaturus* mandible in McIntyre Gully), Dr. Merrilees and I together re-examined the Moorgup Hill site, but we found no other specimen resembling mine, nor have I on subsequent visits. It seems likely that Moorgup Hill, like McIntyre Gully, includes patches of a Quaternary breccia made up mainly of fragments of Cretaceous sedimentary rocks, and including mammalian fossils. But up to the present, it has been impossible to define the areal extent or thickness of such patches, or to visualize their relationship with the underlying marine sediments or with the existing topography.

—M. A. TYRER, Perth.

White Ibis and Glossy Ibis in South-Western Australia.—During a visit to Lake Jandabup about three miles east of Wanneroo on February 5, 1970, I noticed a party of White Ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*) feeding in company with Straw-necked Ibis (*T. spinicollis*) on a small swamp just north of the main lake.

The swamp was almost dry and it was the white plumage of the birds contrasting with the black mud which first attracted my attention. With the aid of binoculars (16 x 56) I located 15 birds on the swamp, some feeding and some perched on the burnt paper barks (*Melaleuca raphiophylla*) fringing the swamp margin.

On February 6 I visited North Lake and Bibra Lake and located a party of 13 White Ibis in a small muddy swamp adjacent to North Lake. The birds were feeding in association with Swamphens (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) in a patch of burnt bulrushes (*Typha domingensis*) and paper bark. Whilst under observation the birds were disturbed by passing motor cars and disappeared in the direction of North Lake.

Small parties of White Ibis have been recorded in the South-West on several occasions, but sightings seem to have increased in recent years, with the current summer yielding the largest flocks so far recorded (Jenkins, *W. Aust. Nat.*, 11, 1968: 46).

Sightings of the Glossy Ibis are less frequent than those of the White Ibis and flocks are seldom, if ever, seen in the South-West. It is of interest, therefore, to record that four Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and one White Ibis were seen feeding with about 20 Straw-necked Ibis in Benger swamp in December 1967.

—C. F. H. JENKINS, Department of Agriculture, Perth.

Pelicans Feeding on Cobbler Heads.—At present (April 1970) professional fishermen are catching large numbers of Cobblers (*Cnidogobius megastoma*) in their nets set in Wilson's Inlet on the south coast. Some of these fish are large, weighing up to 4lb. but the average would be 1-1½lb. Before cobblers are sent to market the head is cut off behind the pectoral and dorsal fins which sheath the poison spines, and the fish gutted. The heads and viscera are usually thrown into the shallow water at the edge of the inlet. The Silver Gulls (*Larus novaehollandiae*) quickly dispose of the viscera leaving the heads untouched. Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) then move in and dispose of all the heads. The heads are picked up singly, juggled for a few seconds in the pouch of the beak and then swallowed. Each head has three very strong, rigid poisonous spines protruding from it but these seem to cause no inconvenience to the birds. The head of a 4lb. Cobbler is a fearsome thing with poison

spines nearly two inches long. A stab from one of these is an agonising experience and often requires hospital treatment. The fishermen state that if it were not for the Pelicans cleaning up the Cobbler heads they would have to bury them as a stab from an old and long dead Cobbler's spine will still inflict a very painful wound.

One cannot help wondering how the digestive tract of the Pelican copes with this mass of poisonous spines after a meal of Cobbler heads. They certainly have no ill effects on the birds as the same six Pelicans frequented our beach for a fortnight and received a meal of Cobbler heads on most days.

—D. H. PERRY, Victoria Park.

Call-notes of Bronze Cuckoos, *Clayococcyx lucidus* and *basalis*—Serventy and Whittell (*Birds of Western Australia*, 1967: 279-281) state that the two local species of bronze cuckoos can be readily separated by their call-notes. My observations dispute this.

In the Darling Range west of Mundaring Weir, the Golden Bronze Cuckoo, *C. lucidus*, is the commoner cuckoo, being most numerous near cultivated areas where it feeds extensively on the hairy black caterpillars of the tiger moth, *Spilosoma glatignyi*. During times of low population density, posturing behaviour between individuals is rare and birds frequently utter "pee-pee-pee" calls which often culminate in a drawn-out "pee-er." In an uninterrupted sequence of between 15 and 20 "pee" notes the final note is nearly always given. Often after about 6 or more "pee" notes the call ceases. In August when population levels are high, sometimes as many as 6 birds gather and prolonged posturing takes place, during which tails and wings are fanned vigorously and a continuous series of "pee-er" notes are uttered (cf. courtship behaviour in *C. basalis*, Kloot, *Euuu*, 69: 116). At other times one bird of a pair will chase a newcomer, both birds uttering "pee-er" notes. Sometimes even a solitary bird will utter "pee-er" notes, but not as a continuous series.

In the same area the Narrow-billed Bronze Cuckoo, *C. basalis*, is infrequently observed. They usually attract attention by calling from the topmost dead limb of a tree. The most frequent call is a series of "pee-er" notes. Timed series vary from 18 "pee-ers" in 33 seconds to 24 in 37 seconds. The only other call recorded, syllabised as "still" or "strill" is given apparently at random, including in flight. This note is lower pitched than the "pee-er" call and is very similar to a call, while perched, of the Elegant Parrot.

My observations indicate that call notes may not be diagnostic unless the activity of the birds is noted.

—JOHN DELL, Kalamunda.

Catching Pygmy Possums.—I am submitting this short note to record an interesting discovery made by Mr. M. A. Moir, who farms the property known as 'Salisbury,' south-east of Borden, W.A.

I know of no certain way of obtaining specimens of *Cercartetus*. For instance, in contrast to most rodents, they do not readily come to traps; on the other hand, the very considerable number of Pygmy Possums sent in to the W.A. Museum by members of the public, who have chanced upon them, is testimony that they are common enough animals. It is hoped that the details below may serve as the basis for a method which could provide numbers of these animals to zoologists needing them for research purposes.

During the early part of July 1967 Mr. Moir hung hessian sacks over the wire strands at two levels along a stretch of the fence between two of his paddocks. The result was that the upper sacks lapped over the lower ones, which in turn were clear of the ground by several inches. When he came to take the sacks down again nearly two months later he found that about a dozen small mammals were using the overlap of the sacks as daytime shelters. He photographed one of them, and later sent